

March 27, 2006

“For the want of a nail the shoe was lost. For the want of a shoe the horse was lost. For the want of a horse the rider was lost. For the want of a rider the battle was lost. For the want of a battle the kingdom was lost. And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.”

That wise comment is attributed to the great Benjamin Franklin, and it points out the risk that California faces by continuing to neglect its essential infrastructure. That’s why Governor Schwarzenegger continues to fight for measures that would generate the funding necessary to strengthen infrastructure necessities like levees and water supply. Agriculture got an opportunity to learn about the governor’s vision first-hand last month at the World Ag Expo in Tulare
<http://www.visaliatimesdelta.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060216/NEWS01/602160319>.

Having grown up on a farm himself, Governor Schwarzenegger is always concerned about the challenges facing farmers and ranchers and looks forward to his visits with them. Agriculture will benefit greatly from the governor’s Strategic Growth Initiative:
http://www.governor.ca.gov/govsite/pdf/press_release_2006/SGP_Overview.pdf . To quote Ben Franklin again: “A little neglect may breed great mischief.” Now is the time to make sure the mischief never comes.

We have adopted a similar approach to preparation at CDFA as we watch the H5N1 avian flu virus circle the globe. We have just introduced a new Web page with links to the latest news on the disease: <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/pa/birdflu/> . There is also a good site hosted by several federal government agencies: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/> . There is a significant likelihood that, if the virus reaches California, it will first surface in birds. We have been working for months now to prepare, along with our partners at the USDA, the California Department of Health Services, the California Office of Homeland Security, the California Department of Fish and Game, and the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services. To view CDFA’s response plan for avian flu, please select this link: http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/pdfs/Overview_FAD_Response_1.pdf .



Secretary Kawamura, left, and World Ag Expo Chairman Erin Ferguson, second from right, give Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger a tour at the International AgriCenter in Tulare, California.
photo: © t. douglass / visalia times-delta

We had a head start in generating the plan, due to an outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease in 2002/2003. We set quarantine boundaries, put down more than 3 million birds, and eradicated the disease in 11 months. We would use a similar approach of the H5N1 virus or any other highly virulent animal disease was detected in California.

Looking ahead on a different front, it won't be long now until Congress votes on the next Farm Bill. Reauthorization is scheduled for 2007, and federal lawmakers are already soliciting comments from around the country. Earlier this month, I was honored to testify at a field hearing in Stockton before the House Committee on Agriculture <http://agriculture.house.gov/press/109/pr060303.html>. At CDFA, we believe that an expansion of the Farm Bill is justified. Now is the time to decide collectively how much we are willing to invest in food security. The investment could and should be made to prepare for future globalization challenges and to promote nutrition, conservation and the development of biofuels as priorities. We welcome your input on the Farm Bill as we continue to communicate with Washington about our needs.
http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdafarmbill?navtype=SU&navid=FARM_BILL_FORUMS

There's a great event coming this week that I hope you are planning to attend: the annual Ag Day celebration at the State Capitol, scheduled for March 29. Over the years, we have created what has become an annual agricultural festival on the capitol grounds, with some great booths, excellent music, and an informative program that gives California agriculture the credit it deserves for its unparalleled production of food, fiber, flowers and shelter. Here is a link on the CDFA web site with more information:

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/pa/AgDay06.htm>.

Please mark your calendars. I look forward to seeing you there!



Secretary Kawamura and House Committee on Agriculture Chairman Bob Goodlatte at the Farm Bill field hearing in Stockton, California on Friday, March 3, 2006.

photo: a. rowalski / house committee on agriculture

As always, thank you for your support and don't hesitate to contact my office with any questions or concerns.

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